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Was he the mole of moles?

BOOK REVIEW/Arnold Beichman

The British domestic counter-espionage agency, MI5, and the espionage and intelligence-gathering agency, MI6, performed brilliantly in World War II. MI5 ran Operation "Double Cross," which detected German spies as fast as they entered Britain and turned them into double agents. MI6 was responsible for the Ultra-Enigma coup, which broke the supposedly unbreakable German codes.

Since the end of the war, Chapman Pincher writes, "the reputations of both services have plummeted ... following a succession of disgraceful spy scandals."

What accounts for so drastic a deterioration in performance of these two agencies? As anyone who has followed events in Britain knows, the Germans and their allies couldn't penetrate the British secret services; the Soviets did. The latter made treachery to one's native land a moral obligation for some of Britain's intellectual elite. Nor were the intellectual elites of other democracies immune.

According to Mr. Pincher, whose earlier works contained sensational revelations on the collapse of British espionage, the Soviets "have deeply penetrated" not only MI5 and MI6 but Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the British equivalent of the U.S. National Security Agency, as well as the Foreign Office and the Defence Ministry. The combined years of treachery of all proven major Soviet spies in Britain — the number of years they functioned before they were exposed — totals 140 active spy-years. Says Mr. Pincher:

"The real reason for the long run of Soviet successes has been the ineffectiveness of all the British departments concerned with security, and especially of the main department, MI5."

Even worse, he says, is the fact that "peculiar" circumstances in Britain "permitted so many men, and some women, to betray their country for long periods before being detected, and, in too many instances, without being brought to justice when they were detected."

Of particular interest to American readers will be Mr. Pincher's recommendation of a sys-

tem of independent supervision of the secret services and more accountability to Parliament which, he says, "could greatly improve the efficiency of the secret services and reduce the risk of their being penetrated by more traitors."

By the Intelligence Act of 1980, Congress established two select committees on intelligence, one in the House, the other in the Senate, with full-time professional staffs. Both committees have extraordi-

nary powers over the CIA, especially over its budget, which is under the direct supervision of Sen. Malcom Wallop. In addition, there are two presidential boards that keep tabs on the CIA and other intelligence agencies. Something like that system is what Mr. Pincher wants for Britain.

One big reason for supporting independent oversight of the British intelligence agencies, says Mr. Pincher, would be to preclude — when spy revelations occur — the usual coverups by the British government, whose ministers depend on the advice of the very intelligence officials who could be responsible for the failure to stop Soviet penetration in time.

Another "heinous" activity on the part of MI5 and MI6, Mr. Pincher charges, is the deliberate misleading of the CIA about Soviet espionage "purely to save the loss of professional face." Oversight could prevent this practice.

The dramatic focus of this book is on Sir Roger Hollis, head of MI5 from 1956 to 1965, who died in 1973. As far as Mr. Pincher is concerned, Mr. Hollis was a longtime Soviet agent, perhaps as far back as 1937, the Mole of Moles, second only to Kim Philby, who defected to the Soviet Union after years of high-level service in British counterintelligence.

The evidence for this accusation is entirely circumstantial. What strengthens Mr. Pincher's case against Mr. Hollis is that it is supported by one former director-general of MI5, a former GCHQ director, at least two former directors of MI6, and several former long-

serving officers of both MI5 and MI6.

However, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and an investigation she ordered exonerated Mr. Hollis. Nevertheless suspicion about him lingers on, because, Mr. Pincher writes, so many MI5 operations went wrong in the 1950s and 1960s and only the presence of a Soviet agent in MI5 could explain these failings.

Whatever the truth is about Mr. Hollis, the fact is undeniable that British intelligence suffered massive and damaging penetration from 1939 on. Investigative journalists like Mr. Pincher believe that despite arrests, convictions and exposés, Soviet agents still operate within the British intelligence community.

Too Secret Too Long is not an easy book to read. One slogs through its pages, trying to ignore typos, jumbled paragraphs and sclerotic prose. Despite these deficiencies, Mr. Pincher has done a magnificent job of research, with a superabundance of footnotes, page-notes and appendices to bolster a case which has seriously distressed the British establishment.

The book has been harshly attacked in *The Times Literary Supplement* because of its indictment of Mr. Hollis. Yet there is sufficient reason to regard Mr. Pincher's verdict sympathetically because for so many decades Britain has been a land of Beulah for the Soviet KGB and GRU. The Thatcher government, no less than its predecessors, has yet to tell its own people the complete story of Soviet control — and if not control in the days of Mr. Philby, what else was it? — of British intelligence. Perhaps such reticence is the price of "détente"; otherwise it might be difficult to persuade the British public to receive the likes of Mikhail Gorbachev as an honored guest.

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Too Secret Too Long
By Chapman Pincher
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